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Chagrin Fall Intermediate School

Digital Academy Final Project

Project Summary

I am an Intervention Specialist at Chagrin Falls Intermediate School. I serve students in grades 4, 5, and 6. Their disabilities range from severe learning disabilities, autism, Down syndrome, and cognitive disabilities. To help guide this project, I used my students’ IEP (Individualized Education Plan) writing goals. IEP goals are all standards based and I picked: After completing a graphic organizer, STUDENT will write a paragraph with a clear main idea and at least 3 supportive detail sentences in 2/3 samples per quarter. For my final Digital Academy project, I chose to have my students compose a fiction paragraph using Read, Write, and Gold. Read, Write, Gold is a writing software program that has many features, including text to speech, phonetic spell checker, talking dictionary, a thesaurus, and word prediction, just to name a few. By the end of the school year, I want my students to be able to compose a typed paragraph independently using Read, Write, Gold.

For the first half of the school year, I reviewed how to write a complete paragraph (topic sentence, 3 detail sentences, concluding sentence). I also introduced Read, Write, Gold to all of my students. I had to introduce each component separately, model the component, then have the students continually practice. First, I showed them how to open the program and Microsoft Word. The students mastered this quickly. Next I showed them was how to use the word prediction, text to speech, and the phonetic spell checker components. The students loved it! They really enjoyed the text to speech component- they loved hearing the computer read aloud what they typed. The word prediction and phonetic spell checker is very helpful to the students when they are unsure of how to spell a word they want to use in their writing. We first practiced typing sentences using Read, Write, Gold, then worked up to typing paragraphs.

Reflection

The technology I chose to use (Read, Write, Gold) was a perfect fit for my class. It is so user friendly that all of my students were able to use it successfully, and their ability levels varied from 2nd grade to 5th grade levels. I had to do a lot of modeling at the beginning of the year, but the students are now either completely independent or mostly independent in using the program with the taught components.

If I was to do this project over again, I would definitely make an adjustment. To introduce Read, Write, Gold, I demonstrated it to the whole group together. I think that this overwhelmed and confused many of the students. Instead, I would demonstrate it to each writing group separately, which would consist of groups of 4 or less. This would also be helpful because of the range of abilities in my class- some students were able to figure out how to navigate the program quickly, and others needed more modeling and re-teaching.

Since completing my project, other teachers have asked me to show them how to use Read, Write, Gold. It is important for us to discuss new ways to help our students be successful in the classroom. Since there are many different components to the program, some of us meet to share new things we have discovered and new ideas to use with our students. I am very pleased with the work my students are able to complete using Read, Write, Gold and will continue to use it in the classroom whenever possible.